



U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bay-Delta Fish & Wildlife Service
650 Capitol Mall, Suite 8-300
Sacramento, CA 95814



Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
2800 Cottage Way-E1604
Sacramento, CA 95825



NOAA Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
650 Capitol Mall, Suite 5-100
Sacramento, CA 95814

DEC 15 2011

Dr. Clifford Dahm
Delta Science Program
Delta Stewardship Council
980 Ninth Street, Suite 1450
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Dr Dahm:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), collectively the Federal Agencies, have received your December 14, 2011, letter transmitting the Independent Review Panel's (IRP) 2011 report on the Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) Actions Affecting the Coordinated Operation of the Central Valley and State Water Projects Water Operations. The Federal Agencies appreciate the Delta Science Program (DSP) and IRP's assistance in fulfilling a critical component of adaptive management within NMFS' RPA, as well as the commitment of the Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce to undertake an integrated annual review of the NMFS and FWS biological opinions and RPAs.

It is clear from our initial read of the report that the Panelists were diligent and thoughtful in addressing their charge of helping us learn appropriate lessons from evaluating real-time operations during the 2011 water year. The IRP's expertise, including anadromous fish, estuarine ecology, native fish biology and ecology, and hydrodynamics and transport modeling, is critical to its independent review of the complex and challenging real-time operations and scientific studies that the agencies engage in throughout the year. We appreciate the recommendations and the acknowledgement that the agencies charged with the unique challenges of balancing existing commitments and mandated co-equal goals of (1) providing a reliable water supply for California and (2) protecting, restoring and enhancing the Delta ecosystem from which water resources are derived for a multitude of human uses, strive to cooperate and integrate activities directed at achieving these commitments and goals within the context of persistent change in environmental and socio-economic conditions.

We are in the process of carefully evaluating the report including the critiques as well as the recommendations for adjustments to the implementation of some RPA components. The DSP can be assured that the recommendations and responses from the IRP will be considered carefully by the Federal Agencies as we continue to develop lessons learned, incorporate new science, and make appropriate scientifically-justified adjustments to our respective RPAs or their implementation to support water year 2012 real-time decision making. This report is the latest in

a series of independent science reviews that have ensured that the Federal Agencies are constantly learning from and incorporating the best scientific information into implementation actions necessary to protect ESA-listed fish while providing irrigation and drinking water to California's farmers and municipalities.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Garwin Yip (NMFS) at (916) 930-3611, or via e-mail at garwin.yip@noaa.gov; Jennifer Norris (FWS) at (916) 930-5633, or via email at jennifer_norris@fws.gov; or Donna Garcia (Reclamation) at (916) 979-0264, or via email at dcgarcia@usbr.gov.

Sincerely,

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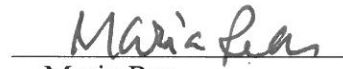
Sincerely,



Michael Chotkowski
Field Supervisor
Bay Delta Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Susan M. Fry
Area Manager
Bay Delta Office
Bureau of Reclamation



Maria Rea
Supervisor
Central Valley Office
National Marine Fisheries Service